

Golf Links to manage Tenn. layout

MANCHESTER, Tenn. — Willowbrook Golf Club, a new 18-hole public golf course here, has chosen Golf Links Inc. of Hermitage as its management company. Golf Links President Jerry Lemons, who also designed Willowbrook's 7,021-yard layout, said his company will provide daily operation management of the entire project, golf shop operations, food service and course management.

The course is scheduled to open in the fall. It features bentgrass greens, Bermuda-grass fairways and roughs, and zoysiagrass approaches and collars. Tall fescue outlines the out-of-play areas that will be used to enhance wildlife.

Lemons said green fees will be comparable to state parks golf courses, which are around \$26 to \$30 with cart for 18 holes.

Incentive travel

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corporations prefer to come during the heart of the golf season, Godwin said.

Cape Cod (Mass.) courses are starting to see the benefits of tapping the incentive travel market, according to Tom Martin, director of Cape Cod Golf Holiday, a holiday travel firm.

"Corporations are surprised to discover we have 31 public courses in a 70-mile stretch of land," Martin said. "Say a corporation wanted to reward

four executives for successfully completing a major project. We could put them in a centrally located hotel and get them on four different top-quality golf courses. I expect that part of the Cape's business to really grow."

Golf can also be a major component in attracting corporate meetings. "You can only keep executives in a board room for so long," said Taren Grom, an editor with *Corporate and Incentive Travel Magazine*. "Golf is a great amenity and will attract corporate meeting planners. But the course, rooms,

food and other amenities all have to be of corporate incentive travel quality."

The downsizing of companies and budgets in the wake of recent lean economic times has presented some opportunities for Northern golf resorts that can cater to regional conference and incentive travel customers.

"It's much more cost effective for, say, a Chicago company to hold its corporate meeting or send its best salespeople to a Michigan resort rather than Florida, Hawaii or the Caribbean," Grom said. "Companies have cut back on travel and are looking at more regional meetings and incentive packages. Northern golf resorts are in a good position to go after them."

Sugarloaf Golf Club in Kingfield, Maine, is becoming increasingly involved in the regional market and targets Maine companies.

"Some stay at the hotel, but most of our incentive players come up for the day," said Sugarloaf Conference Sales Manager Scott Wentzel. "The company will typically spend \$75 on green fees and a cart plus another \$50 or more in the clubhouse. We get a lot of foursomes and occasionally groups of 15, 20 or more."

Travel agencies specializing in corporate and golf travel typically book incentive and meeting arrangements for their clients. Moritz Travel of St. Louis, for instance, reportedly books \$200 million of incentive travel annually.

"One way to get involved in the incentive travel market is to contact some of the larger incentive and golf travel agencies," said William Hogan, managing director of Wide World of Golf, a golf travel firm based in Carmel, Calif. "Put together a packet of information and send it out."

Grom had several additional suggestions:

- Go to the local convention and visitors bureau and get a feel for the type of companies that have expressed interest in that area.
- Contact the two best-known corporate travel associations — Meeting Planners International (214-712-7700) and the Society of Incentive Travel Executives (212-575-0910) — for information or to purchase mailing lists.
- Send press releases and consider advertising in corporate travel publications.
- Put together a public relations and marketing package stressing golf packages.

"With tight budgets, corporate travel planners are looking for extras when deciding between destinations," Grom said. "Consider something like a free cocktail party or golf tournament for anyone booking at least 50 rooms. The cost is minimal and it might mean the difference in being selected."

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